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A-ONE #0812   03/24/06

~ Tax Phishers Warning! ~ People Are Talking!   ~ New PayPal Mobile!
~ Nintendo Goes Vintage! ~ Vista Release Delay!   ~ Lemmings Sees 15!

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
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Let me start off by apologizing to all of our online subscribers. I
inadvertently sent out an e-mail of a personal nature to our A-ONE
subscriber list last week, instead of to one of my personal e-mail
addresses which happens to also starts with the same address. It's been a
really bad few weeks, with not much relief in sight. Anyway, I appreciate
the numerous subscribers for making me aware of this faux pas; I happened to
also get the errant e-mail because I have myself listed on our subscriber
list to be able to make sure each week's issue got out okay.

So, I wish that I was in a better mood; I could certainly continue to
reflect on the slow improvements in our weather the past few days. It's
been cold for the past week, but it looks like we're in for some better
days. I really need to see some real Spring-like weather to get me out of
this funk. I want to be able to get out in the yard and start doing some
work. This is the start of couple of great seasons!

So, let's get to work, and enjoy another week of A-ONE. This is certainly
more enjoyable than listening to me! <grin>

Until next time...

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                         PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                       compiled by Joe Mirando
                         joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'll tell you right off that I'm not
going to have a lot to say this week. It's been rough on several
levels, and I'm not in a real talkative mood. Yeah, yeah, I know,
that's not like me. But what can I tell you? Everyone has an off
day, ya know? <grin>

Seriously though, I've still got a little bit of a sinus infection,
and since Mother Nature is... going through the change... shall we
say?... I've got allergies kicking in.

But you don't care about any of that, right? I mean, you've got your own problems and concerns. What makes us get together every week is not what makes us different, it's what we have in common: Our love of Atari computers. Sure, I don't tend to talk about Atari... or even computers in general... from beginning to end of my intro, but let's face it; there's a very good chance that you know at least as much about Atari computers as I do. There's probably not a lot that I can teach anyone out there about the ST, MegaST or TT that they don't already know.

The best I can offer is to bring to you the info from the UseNet. Since that's what we're here to do, let's get to it, shall we?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Christian Potzinger asks for help finding Omicron Basic:

"I'm searching "Omicron Basic" for the Mega ST. Any Hints where I can find it?"

Karsten LÜdersen tells Christian simply:

"<http://www.berkhan.de/atari/atari.htm>"

'Sonny Jim' asks about finding a particular piece of software:

"Has anyone heard of an atari SAM (software automated mouth) program, preferably for the 1200xl? i had an old 1200xl with a floppy that had it in assembly, but i gave it to my sister. i had a lot of fun with that old thing...have you seen a program like that before?"

'Coda' tells Sonny Jim:

"You want to ask that question at comp.sys.atari.8bit, this is the 16bit newsgroup.

By the way, the only SAM I know is 'System Audio Manager' that came with the Atari Falcon."

Sonny Jim replies:

"thank you for that, i forgot. this is for the ataris with the GUIs and the mice, right? i had one of those at one point but i still miss my old 1200xl and Microsoft BASIC :)

10 REMARKABLE PROGRAM
20 PRINT 'Basic rules!'
99 END   "

'GFA MIDI Charles' jumps in and adds:

"Yes I know of a sam ...hey your xl300 is pretty considering you're
online sending emails .

Yes the original voice synth ..right ...I will now read the
gettysburg address ..fworow skrowr end sevvfen yearrrz
igo....like that, right ..?????
I like sam so what I will check my vault and see what's up."

Edward Baiz asks for help with an IDE drive problem:

"In the past two days my Plextor IDE drive has been causing my
Western Digital IDE to boot late after the system has a warm
re-boot. It used to take only 1-2 seconds before the IDE hard
drive kicked in, now it takes about 30-40 seconds.

It does not affect Magic or Tos, but I cannot boot Mint. What
happens is that after 15 seconds the Hades thinks no hard drive is
there so it boots up what in on the floppy. I am suspecting I need
a new cable. Anyone else have an idea?"

Ronald Hall asks Edward:

"What is it that makes you think its the Plextor doing this? I
mean, could it just be your hard drive going bad?

I also wonder why just after a warm re-boot. It doesn't do this
when it's cold?"

Edward replies:

"It is not the drive as I just bought it two months ago. I did
solve the problem. I installed a new IDE cable and that did it. I
did not think it would work since I used the cable that came with
the WD hard drive. It is a 40-pin 80 connector cable where as the
one that came with the Hades was a 40-pin 40 connector cable. It
worked though and that all that counts. Now I can go and try to
get my Mint partition up and running."

'Joszi' asks for help with MiNT:

"What is the easiest way find out what package contains a specified
file. My problem is that when I start Bash, it complains: "bash:
id: command not found". I assume that it tries to execute command
"id", but it doesn't exist on my system and I would like to know
which package to install."

'Coda' tells Joszi:

"ID would have been installed in the basic package I guess, so I
don't understand why you don't have it.

After some poking around on sparemint.atariforge.net I have found
the package you want here:

http://sparemint.atariforge.net/sparemint/html/packages/sh-utils.html"

Joszi tells Coda:

"Thanks Coda, I found it myself by now. But my question is still:
how can I know which package contains a specified file?
I'm trying to install mint totally manually, so there is no "basic"
package "just" packages (rpm). This is a hard work since I have no
experience only with Windoze."

Ronald Hall adds:

"Sparemint uses RPMs now, right? If it does, can't you use the RPM
facilities to query?

For example, on an RPM based linux box, you (as su/root) could do
a:

[root@darkforce darklord]# rpm -q --whatprovides cedega
cedega-5.0-1

This is assuming that what you're looking for is installed by RPM
and can be found in the RPM database. Just a thought."

Joszi explains:

"Yes, but my problem is that what I am looking for is NOT installed
and I want to know which package to install."

Ronald replies:

"Okay, if I'm following you correctly, then what you are looking
for is dependencies?

Hmm, when you go to compile the software, (I'm
assuming ./configure, make, make install?) it should tell you
what's missing. As for RPM, it will too.

Too bad we don't have something like YUM or URPMI or APT-GET. That
way, those pesky dependencies are usually taken care of for ya.

Even under modern Linux distros, sometimes its a job to install
software."

Joszi explains further:

"Not really dependencies. In my case the following happened:
- I installed BASH from BASH....rpm (binary). It worked well.
- Then I installed a couple of rpms (binary), all successfully.
But one of them installed/replaced a script that tried to use the
command "ID". Since then, when I start BASH it complains abut the
command "ID". Maybe the references list of one of the package was
incomplete. (there is no provides specified manually for rpm)"

Mark Duckworth adds:

"Sparemint's dependency tree is really trashed. We're quite lazy
due to the static linking situation so as much as we try, we do
inherently miss stuff.

The new sparemint site, http://dev.sparemint.org will have a file
search function as part of a larger query system I'm implementing
soon but it's not done yet. The easiest way to get done what you
want to get done is simply to get in touch with an easymint using
friend and have them do rpm -qf /bin/id

Here's an example of the output on my Fedora Core 5 system:

[mduckworth@evil ~]$ rpm -qf /usr/bin/interdiff
patchutils-0.2.31-2.2.1

But there's no way for your freemint system or RPM to give you
information about packages that it doesn't even have."

Joszi tells Mark:

"That would be great! If I can help in anything, please let me
know. I'm good at SQL, I can write stored procedures, queries,
etc. for you. By the way, I've just downloaded all the RPMs. Just
need to find a tool to look in them on my peecee..."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but that's
all there is. Tune in again next week, same time, same station,
and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintento Going Vintage!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Lemmings! 15 Years!
                                    Will PS3 Outsell 360?
                                    And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                Beloved Videogame Classic Lemmings Celebrates
               15th Anniversary With Its Debut on the PSP System

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the May 23, 2006 launch of Lemmings, available for the PSP system. Developed by Team 17, Lemmings for the PSP re-creates the timeless formula of the Lemmings franchise and delivers a unique blend of nostalgic puzzle gameplay for all ages.

First introduced to the world in 1991, Lemmings is considered to be one of the most platform-ported games of all time. In Lemmings, players guide masses of hapless little green-haired creatures through various maze-like levels that have an entrance point and an exit point. Quick thinking and skillful management of the Lemmings group is critical because danger lurks at every step of their relentless march. Players will need to control the Lemmings to avoid doom and disaster, including the threat of raging rivers, steep cliffs, pits of lava, mechanical spikes, and flame-throwing turrets that threaten the Lemmings' safety. Lemmings features more than 150 levels, including more than 20 all-new puzzles created specifically for the PSP. In addition, the game will host a new mix of music, custom level creation, and wireless capability to share newly created levels.

"Lemmings delivers a very unique and addictive style of puzzle gameplay that players of all ages can enjoy," said Susan Nourai, director, online and product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "As the franchise turns 15 this year, we are happy to see the enduring appeal it has for fans around the world and are thrilled that today's generation will be able to experience the excitement of Lemmings on PSP."

Lemmings presents a wide variety of challenges where players will have a chance to utilize creative solutions to guide each mindless creature to safety. The game offers many variations to complete a level; in certain cases players must sacrifice some Lemmings for the greater good, in other situations all Lemmings will need to be saved. To add an additional challenge, players will need to race against a rapidly depleting clock. Each puzzle varies in complexity and all require a certain strategic element to solve each one. Enhancing the classic gameplay found in previous versions of the game, Lemmings for PSP brings all-new brilliantly detailed graphics to provide a fresh look to the franchise. Players will also be treated to a new mix of music to complement the vibrant visuals and challenging gameplay. Exclusively for the PSP, an extensive level editor is available to allow players to create their own customized game levels. Additionally, players will be able to share their custom-created levels with others via Infrastructure mode and the wireless gamesharing feature will provide players the opportunity to transmit samples of custom-created levels to others via Ad-Hoc mode.

Electronic Arts Rolls Out The Godfather Game

Electronic Arts Inc. on Tuesday said its highly anticipated, but much delayed, video game based on the popular "Godfather" films is now in U.S. stores, and will debut in Europe on March 24.

Last July it pushed back the launch of "The Godfather The Game," sending its shares lower, when it said the game would not make the crucial Christmas retail delivery window.

The game, created via a licensing relationship with Viacom Inc. affiliates Paramount Pictures and Viacom Consumer Products, is available for Sony

Corp.'s.PlayStation 2, Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox and also for personal
computers. It is based on the Mario Puzo book and Paramount Pictures movie
and features some of the voices of the original actors.

The Godfather game was developed by EA Redwood Shores which created other
game franchises including Lord of the Rings and Tiger Woods PGA Tour.

Nintendo to Bring Older Games to Console

Nintendo Co. announced a partnership with former rivals Thursday intended
to boost the library of downloadable classic video games for the company's
upcoming Revolution console.

The agreement covers some of the more than 1,000 games made by Sega and
Hudson Soft for the now-defunct Sega Genesis console and the TurboGrafx 16
system, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata said.

The Revolution's planned "Virtual Console" download service was already
expected to also play older Nintendo-made games like "Mario Bros" and
"Zelda."

"No one else can match the environment we're creating for expanding the
game experience to everyone," said Iwata, speaking at the Game Developer's
Conference in San Jose. "Our path is not linear, but dynamic."

He did not discuss pricing, availability or other details.

Long before Microsoft Corp. and Sony Corp. entered the console business,
the Genesis and TurboGrafx 16 systems competed with Nintendo's Super NES
for video game dominance in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Sega eventually dropped hardware in favor of software. Hudson and NEC Corp.
jointly developed the TurboGrafx 16, which had a strong showing in Japan
but poor sales in the United States.

Sony unveiled its online strategy for its upcoming PlayStation 3 console
Wednesday, saying it would offer new features ranging from video chat and
voice communications over the Internet to the ability to purchase and
download game or other entertainment content directly to the machine.

Will PlayStation 3 Outsell Xbox 360?

Last week's announcement that Sony Computer Entertainment will delay the
introduction of its PlayStation 3 game console was seen by many as a chance
for Microsoft to consolidate its early lead in the next-generation console
market. However, the delay of the PlayStation 3 is unlikely to hurt Sony in
the long run, according to analyst firm In-Stat.

"Sony will continue its domination of the video [game] console market
through 2010," In-Stat said.

The PlayStation 3 will account for slightly more than 50 percent of all
next-generation console sales through 2010, extending Sony's domination of
the game console market, In-Stat said.

While the relatively early launch of the Xbox 360 will not threaten sales
of the PlayStation 3, Microsoft's head start will give it an edge over
Nintendo, In-Stat said.

Other factors that will boost Xbox 360 over the Revolution are its strong
market position in North America and appeal to older gamers, it said.

Between now and 2010, 2006 is expected to be the slowest year for console
sales, In-Stat said. Sales this year are expected to be around 25 million
units. This figure will rise to about 39 million next year and hit 42
million the year after, In-Stat said.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

First Alpha Release of Firefox 2.0 Is Imminent

Developers at the Mozilla Foundation are readying the first alpha version
of the Firefox 2 open-source browser, and could release it as early as
Tuesday. The release includes a new "Places" feature intended to make it
easier to find and return to recently visited Web pages.

The development team decided to freeze the code for what will become
Firefox 2.0a1 as of last Thursday, with a view to releasing the code this
Friday, according to the minutes of a Firefox 2 status meeting held March
14 at the foundation's headquarters. However, another notice posted to the
Web page of the Mozilla Developer Center advised that the Thursday code
freeze could lead to a release as early as Tuesday.

The foundation's "tinderbox" server, which automatically recompiles and
packages the latest Firefox code as it is updated, listed a package labeled
firefox-2.0a1 as available for download last week, prompting some Mozilla
watchers to claim the alpha version had already been released.

However, that file is for internal use, and Mozilla engineers in Mountain
View, California, will officially release the software when they have
finished testing it, according to Tristan Nitot, president of Mozilla
Europe.

If testing goes well then the software will be released, but if it uncovers
major problems, they will be fixed and the testing process will begin
again, he said.

"You can never be sure of the [release] date. It might be tonight, it might
be Friday," he said.

Unlike beta versions of software, which are usually feature-complete but
may contain bugs, the first alpha release of Firefox 2 will lack many of

the new features planned for the final version.

One of the hallmarks of Firefox is "tabbed browsing", allowing users to flip between views of different Web pages they have opened by clicking on "tabs" like those found in a card index. Firefox developers plan to add an "undo close tab" feature to help users return to a page for which they have accidentally closed the tab, but this feature has now been pushed back to the second alpha release, due next quarter, according to the minutes of the status meeting.

An on-the-fly spelling checker for text typed into Web forms was also pushed back to the alpha 2 release because of difficulties integrating the code into the foundation's e-mail client, Thunderbird.

Features included in the alpha 1 release include the Places dialog, which makes it easier to find and return to previously visited pages based on their content rather than their address, and a system for remotely disabling third-party extensions to the browser. These extensions can be installed by users to add functionality or change the behavior of the browser, but may cause it to crash or pose a security risk. Firefox 2 will consult a list of extensions on a central server and refuse to load those that the Mozilla developers consider unsafe.

Microsoft to Delay Windows Vista Release

Microsoft Corp. will delay the consumer release of its new Windows operating system until January 2007, missing the holiday sales season and throwing some PC makers and retailers into turmoil.

The delay in Windows Vista - caused by Microsoft needing more time to enhance security and other functions - will come as a blow to Microsoft partners who were looking forward to a new operating system to boost holiday sales.

"It's a much bigger deal for the computer makers than it is for anybody else," said David Smith, a vice president with Gartner Inc.

Windows Vista is Microsoft's first major update to the company's flagship operating system since Windows XP was released in late 2001, meaning partners will be left with a fifth major holiday season without a new version of the operating system to promote.

"It's not the optimal situation, to be launching the next-generation version of Windows right after the big holiday sales season," said analyst Joe Wilcox with Jupiter Research.

A spokesman for Dell Inc. declined to comment on how the delay might affect sales. In a statement released by Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard Co. said it supported Microsoft's decision to make quality a priority in scheduling the operating system's release.

Microsoft will release some versions of the new operating system for big businesses in November as planned, but the consumer version will be postponed until January, said Jim Allchin, co-president of the Microsoft division that includes Windows.

Wilcox said releasing the system in November to businesses would likely

help Microsoft - since its business sales are highly profitable - while the delay in the consumer release would be most harmful to its partners.

"You can play semantics and say that the operating system is shipping in 2006, but if consumers can't buy it until 2007, PC manufacturers don't have it to sell to them," Wilcox said. "This blow falls on the partners."

Allchin said the decision to delay the Vista release came after Microsoft realized that Vista would be completed several weeks later than originally planned, largely because of efforts to improve security in the new system. Microsoft's Windows operating system has been an immensely popular target of Internet attackers, leading to a major companywide initiative to improve security in all its products.

That delay was enough for some retailers, computer makers and other corporate partners to say they would have trouble preparing for the holiday season. Allchin said troubling factors included the time it takes to move computers from overseas manufacturers onto store shelves.

"The fact is that we wanted everybody in the industry to be ready for this," Allchin told journalists and analysts in a conference call.

In an interview, Allchin said he suspects some computer makers may give consumers who buy a new PC during the holidays a way to easily upgrade once Vista becomes available. But he said he couldn't predict how the delay might affect holiday season computer sales.

Analyst Matt Rosoff with independent research firm Directions on Microsoft said he suspects computer makers are likely displeased with the situation, but with Microsoft's stranglehold on the operating system market they have little control over it.

"Certainly PC makers aren't going to be happy about it, but I don't know exactly what they're going to do. They'll wait," he said. "There's not a whole lot of choice at this point."

Apple Computer Set to Mark 30th Birthday

Silicon Valley's historic orchards have virtually disappeared but one notable fruit still stands: Apple.

As the storied company celebrates its 30th birthday in a week, Apple Computer Inc. will have brushed off its bruises from product failures and arguably misguided decisions to emerge with a shine that's more than skin-deep.

Its brand name and products - from the Mac to the iPod - resonate as both hip and innovative. For all of its recent successes, however, Apple also has its share of challenges ahead as it matures into a digital media provider.

In the digital music arena, where Apple dominates, French lawmakers are angling to force the company to change its successful way of chaining its popular iPod player to its online iTunes Music Store.

Recording labels are also chafing at Apple's insistence that its song downloads remain 99 cents apiece. Apple's CEO Steve Jobs rebutted by

calling the record industry "greedy."

In the computer space, where Apple is seeing its best sales in years, information-security firms have discovered a few new vulnerabilities in its Macintosh operating system.

Though the security breaches have been innocuous, security experts say they signal that Apple is a higher-profile target now for hackers, who in the past have focused heavily on Microsoft Corp.'s predominant Windows system.

"Apple is on more people's radar now that the company is a major force," said Tim Bajarin, president of Creative Strategies, a technology consultancy. "And these are all growing pains."

Apple's journey began in 1976 when two college dropouts - Jobs, a marketing whiz, and his friend Steve Wozniak, an engineering genius - filed partnership papers on April Fools' Day, their eyes set on building and selling personal computers. Another friend, Ron Wayne, opted out of the risky venture within two weeks.

Their first product was a build-it-yourself computer kit. A year later, in 1977, the Apple II microcomputer was born. It was not the first personal computer but it was the most successful - a hit not just among engineers, but home users, too. Many credit the Apple II as the genesis of the personal computer revolution.

Apple's cultural and technological influences only grew from there. Some of the Cupertino, Calif.-based company's creations have been duds that failed to make it any money, but became a source of inspiration and income for others.

The Apple Lisa, introduced in 1983, used an innovative icon- and mouse-based graphical user interface that laid the foundation of today's computers and replaced the previous arcane text-based systems. But the Lisa was a commercial flop: Its high price_ $9,995 - sent business users to PCs from rival IBM Corp.

The hugely successful - and more affordable - Apple Macintosh followed in 1984, giving birth to desktop publishing by allowing users to create their own newsletters or printed material.

Microsoft eventually copied the user-friendly graphical interface and licensed its Windows software to manufacturers who copied the IBM PC. The clones proliferated while Macintosh sales were hobbled by Apple's decision not to license its software to other hardware makers.

The next decade was punctuated by an internal power struggle that forced then-chairman Jobs to leave the company, a series of execution missteps, and botched projects - most notably the Newton, a handheld computer dubbed a personal digital assistant.

In 1996, when Apple was struggling for a foothold in the personal computing market and its efforts to upgrade its operating system were going nowhere, the company bought Jobs' second computer company, NeXT, returning the prodigal son to the fold, and later to the helm.

Jobs, whose charismatic persona is the face of Apple, led the company's resurrection with one breakthrough after another - first with the iMac, then the slick new OS X operating system, then the iPod music player, then the market-leading online iTunes store.

A side venture Jobs founded during his absence from Apple, Pixar Animation Studios Inc., had also put the already celebrated high-tech executive in the middle of Hollywood. The connection to Pixar, which is now being acquired by The Walt Disney Co., has since bolstered Apple's rising star in the world of digital entertainment and consumer electronics.

Apple's iPod and iTunes franchises have popularized the notion of music - and more recently, video - on-the-go. They also spawned the modern explosion in podcasts, or self-made broadcasts of audio programming over the Internet to portable gadgets.

Today, Apple's well-honed, self-propelled reputation as David fighting the Goliath of Microsoft and the rest of the PC industry belies reality.

Apple may still hold roughly only a 4 percent share of the worldwide PC market, but analysts say its current operating system set the bar for rival Microsoft with innovative features, including 3D-like imaging and a side pane for "widget" applications.

Many analysts expect that Apple's market-dominating iPod - which works with both Windows and Macintosh machines - and its new computers based on Intel Corp. chips - the same used by Windows - will help grow Apple's slice of the PC market.

Meanwhile, Apple's financial health is better than ever. It posted record revenue of nearly $14 billion for its fiscal 2005 and is armed with more than $8 billion in cash.

"Apple will continue to be a force in portable music and video, and desktop innovation," Bajarin said. "Its key challenge now is how it will extend the Mac more into the digital lifestyle, into the living room and the rest of the house, as well as to other portable devices."

No matter how well the company does with its future endeavors, many things people do today - from desktop publishing to music downloads - will long be regarded as the fruits of Apple.

PayPal To Offer Paying by Text Message

Online payment company PayPal said on Wednesday it was preparing to offer a service for consumers to make purchases or money transfers using simple text messaging via mobile phones.

The move by PayPal, a unit of online auctioneer eBay Inc., marks a big step in bridging the worlds of e-commerce and the physical world of brick and mortar stores by giving consumers a pay as you go option via phones, analysts said.

The service, known as PayPal Mobile, will be launched in the next couple of weeks in the United States, Canada and Britain. Other markets worldwide will follow for the world's biggest online payments service.

"PayPal is going to be launching a mobile payments product," PayPal spokeswoman Sara Bettencourt told Reuters.

Word of the service had leaked out earlier on Wednesday when bloggers found

links to test pages on PayPal's Web site describing it. Details can be found at:
(https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=xpt/mobile/MobileSend-outside).
Over time, the company may look to extend the service to the more than 55 countries and regions where PayPal is registered to transfer funds online, Bettencourt said. However, she stressed that PayPal has no specific plans to do so yet.

While designed to make online payments more convenient for the nearly 100 million existing PayPal users, the move to offer a mobile payment service holds out the prospect of reaching vast markets in the developing world where phones, rather than computers, are the main way to connect to the Internet.

PayPal Mobile will offer customers two options for transferring funds, be it for gifts or purchases, by phone to nearly anyone they choose, whether individuals or retailers.

Payments can be sent over a phone via text message or by calling an automated customer service system and using voice commands to transmit funds, according to PayPal's site.

"This is very important because it is going to create an awareness that your mobile phone is much more than just a device for talk," said Dan Schatt, an analyst with financial consulting firm Celent. "It allows you to make transactions."

In effect, the phone has become an electronic wallet.

In the United States, start-up TextPayMe now offers a PayPal-like service that allows consumers to send send payments via text messages. Obopay is set to launch mobile payments with a companion debit card for purchases or cash withdrawls.

Operators of mobile phone systems in Britain, Europe, Australia, Japan and many other parts of Asia are well ahead in investing in mobile payment services. But PayPal's stringent verification system gives it a leg up on independent services as it appeals to a huge base of existing users, Schatt said.

One feature, called Text to Buy, would allow magazine readers, for example, to buy advertised items such as clothes, concert tickets or music or movie-video discs using their mobile phones, by sending product codes located in the ads.

A merchant receiving such a payment would then ship the product to the address stored in the PayPal user's account.

"It's basically just another way to access PayPal," Bettencourt said. "It's just like in the online world when you send a payment," she said. "All you are doing is sending a payment using your phone instead of your computer."

When introduced, mobile phone users will be able to send a text message to 729725 (the spelling of PayPal on a numeric handset keypad) with the amount of money the sender wishes to transfer and the recipient's phone number. On the PayPal Web site, the company uses the example: "Send 5 to 4150001234."

A PayPal computer then calls back the text message sender on the phone and asks the user to enter a secret PIN to confirm the transaction. PayPal

immediately notifies the recipient and tells it how to claim the payment
online.

The Web site shows a second option where the customer calls 1-800-4PAYPAL,
enters a secret PIN, the amount of the transfer and the phone number where
the payment is to be sent.

Largest U.S. Fine Ever Levied for Spam Violations

An Internet marketer will pay a $900,000 fine, the largest ever on
spam-related charges, in a consent decree announced by the U.S. Federal
Trade Commission.

Jumpstart Technologies, based in San Francisco, is permanently prohibited
from unlawful practices related to the U.S. CAN-SPAM Act as part of the
decree, entered in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of
California.

The company, operating as an Internet marketer since July 2002, provided
direct marketing opportunities for advertising partners and collected
marketing data to sell to third parties, the FTC said. Jumpstart, in its
FreeFlixTix promotion, violated the antispam law by disguising its
commercial e-mail messages as personal messages and by misleading consumers
about the terms and conditions of the promotion, the FTC said.

Jumpstart offered free movie tickets to consumers in exchange for the names
and e-mail addresses of five or more of their friends, the FTC said.
Jumpstart then sent the friends commercial e-mail with the original
consumer's e-mail address in the From line and a seemingly personal subject
line such as "Hey," "Happy Valentine's Day," "Happy New Year," or "Movie
time. Let's go."

Jumpstart also made it look as if the original consumer had written the
message text. In this way, Jumpstart's commercial e-mail messages
circumvented some spam filters and were opened by consumers who thought
they contained personal correspondence, the FTC said.

People received six or more e-mail messages urging them to join
FreeFlixTix, some containing advertisements for other products or services
offered by Jumpstart or its partners. In many instances, the subject lines
of the e-mail messages falsely indicated that their friend was sending them
free tickets, and many people who tried to opt out of the promotion kept
getting similar messages for weeks afterward, the FTC said.

The FTC's complaint also alleged that the company engaged in deceptive
advertising by misleading consumers about the terms and conditions of the
FreeFlixTix promotion. To qualify for a "free" movie ticket, some consumers
had to submit their credit card information to one of Jumpstart's
advertising partners and sign up for one of their promotions. Some of
Jumpstart's advertising partners required that consumers pay for the
promotion, while others made "free" offers that consumers had to cancel at
a later date to avoid a charge.

Jumpstart violated provisions of the CAN-SPAM (Controlling the Assault of
Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing) Act by sending commercial e-mail
messages with false or misleading subject and From lines, and by continuing
to sending e-mail messages more than 10 business days after receiving an

opt-out request from consumers, the FTC said. The company also did not clearly identify messages as advertising or solicitations, and did not clearly inform recipients that they could opt out of receiving more e-mail messages.

In more good news for the average e-mail user, four people have been indicted and could face 30 years in prison for a variation on a widespread scam in which e-mail senders claim they're trying to transfer money out of Nigeria, the U.S. Department of Justice announced Thursday.

A grand jury in New York City yesterday returned a 10-count indictment against three of the defendants and an 11-count indictment against the fourth. Alleged victims of the four individuals lost more than $1.2 million, the DOJ said.

The defendants allegedly sent spam e-mail messages to thousands of potential victims, and they falsely claimed to have control of millions of dollars located in a foreign country that belongs to an individual with a terminal illness, according to the DOJ.

Three of the defendants were arrested in Amsterdam by Dutch authorities on February 21, based on a U.S. criminal complaint. They are being held by the Dutch authorities pending extradition to the United States, the DOJ said. The fourth defendant, a Nigerian citizen, is a fugitive.

"Global fraudsters need to know that we are determined to find and prosecute them," U.S. Attorney Roslynn Mauskopf of the Eastern District of New York said in a statement. "Potential victims need to know that any e-mail offering millions of dollars that requires that they send money to receive this windfall is a scheme. Delete it."

The four are Nnamdi Chizuba Anisiobi, also known as Yellowman, Abdul Rahman, Helmut Schkinger, Nancy White, and other aliases; Anthony Friday Ehis, also known as John J. Smith, Toni N. Amokwu and Mr. T; Kesandu Egwuonwu, also known as KeKe, Joey Martin Maxwell, and David Mark; and an unnamed defendant known as Eric Williams, Lee, Chucks, and Nago.

The four are charged with one count of conspiracy, eight counts of wire fraud, and one count of mail fraud. Anisiobi is also charged with one count of bank fraud.

The maximum penalty for mail and wire fraud is 20 years in prison, and the maximum sentence for bank fraud is 30 years in prison. The conspiracy charge carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison.

IRS, Security Company Warn of Tax Phishers

U.S. taxpayers aren't the only ones busy as the April 15 tax filing deadline approaches. Identity thieves posing as the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have also been active, sending out hundreds of thousands of phony phishing e-mail messages, according to the IRS and security vendors Symantec and Websense.

The IRS began warning of the scams late last year when it spotted the first such fraudulent e-mail messages, which claim to come from irs.gov e-mail addresses such as tax-refunds@irs.gov or admin@irs.gov. The messages send users to a clone of the IRS Web site where they're asked for sensitive

financial information.

"We've seen a real uptick in the number of e-mail-type scams," says Nancy
Mathis, an IRS spokesperson. "In late January and early February, there
was an explosion of these things."

The tax agency has been increasingly focused on the phishing threat. Last
Friday it issued an updated phishing warning, which is now linked on the
front page of its Web site. Phishing has now been added to the agency's
annual "Dirty Dozen" compilation of tax scams.

In the past, criminals have used the telephone or appeared in person to
trick taxpayers into revealing financial information, but phishing creates
new opportunities, Mathis says.

"The Internet really gives these phishing thieves an incredible reach,"
she says. "They are able to run the scam from foreign countries, which
makes it more difficult for the Treasury Inspector General to close them
down."

Although IRS phishing scams are increasing, they aren't as widespread as
the the use of sites such as eBay.com, says David Cowings, senior business
intelligence manager with Symantec. "They're currently not in the top 10,"
he says. "They'd probably be in the top 100; I wouldn't put them any higher
than that."

Websense believes that the IRS attacks are run by "the same person or
group of people," who are using more than 60 hacked Web sites, all located
outside of the U.S., says Dan Hubbard, the company's senior director of
security and research.

The IRS has confirmed that 12 Web sites in 18 different countries have
hosted variations of this scam.

Websense has also found fraudsters sending fake e-mail messages that claim
to be from Brazil's Receita tax collection agency. Those messages, which
appear to be from a different group than the IRS scams, tells users that
they must click on a special Web link in order to complete their tax
returns. By clicking on that link, the victim can inadvertently install
key-logging software, Websense said. Websense has posted an alert online.

The bottom line is that unsolicited e-mail that claims to be from the IRS
is fake, the IRS's Mathis says. "We may send a letter, we may call you, but
we will not contact you via e-mail," she says.

Taxpayers wondering about the legitimacy of any communications are
encouraged to call the agency's toll-free number: (800) 829-1040.

                    VeriSign Warns of Massive Net Attacks

There is a new kind of denial-of-service (DoS) attack hitting the Internet
these days, and it has VeriSign and others responsible for handling the
Internet's infrastructure very worried.

The unusually powerful attacks strike at the basic structure of the Net,
exploiting the computers that manage online traffic and using them to
overwhelm Web sites. The effects are similar to more traditional DoS

attacks, but the newer technique by hackers is far more potent because it launches using fewer hacked computers and the ensuing attack is easily amplified to be far more overwhelming.

The new form of attacks emerged at the end of December 2005 and accelerated in January before settling down about mid-February, said VeriSign Chief Security Officer Ken Silva.

He said some 1,500 separate Internet domains have been attacked using the new method. Comparing the attacks to those in October 2002 when nine of the 13 computer "root" servers used to manage all Internet traffic were the object of a massive attack, Silva said that the new attacks were "significantly larger than what we saw in 2002, by an order of magnitude."

Before this new threat emerged, DoS attacks relied on a network of computers that were used to swamp servers with a deluge of seemingly legitimate network traffic. When successful, these attacks caused the victim's server to crash as it frantically tried to respond to the overwhelming number of requests. Recent DoS attacks have been used to disrupt the sites of large corporations and extort money from Web site owners.

The latest series of DoS attacks use a set of compromised computers that send out a torrent or queries; however, the difference is that those queries are sent to the domain name system (DNS) servers with a forged return address that ends up directing responses to the intended victim's servers.

Instead of the bots causing havoc, it is the DNS servers themselves that end up attacking the targeted Web sites. The DNS servers are performing their normal function as the directory service for the Internet and ensuring that requests for data are routed to the correct site. The resulting attacks, according to Silva, are therefore stronger and more difficult to stop.

Because the returned results contain significantly more information than the original request, the victim's network receives thousands of fraudulent messages that amount to gigabytes of information, thus making it far more powerful than a standard DoS attack.

Although it is possible to prevent or stop DoS attacks by blocking the Internet addresses from which the attacks originate, it is not a simple process to block these new DNS attacks, said Frost & Sullivan analyst Rob Ayoub. For the most part, he said, all a business can do is carefully monitor its traffic, have benchmarks in place, check out any spikes, and limit traffic or block specific requests if it needs to.

"These are very difficult to defend against because of the unique method of attack," he said. "Attacking the basic infrastructure we all rely upon is what has made the attacks more effective." However, Ayoub suggested, companies responsible for the DNS servers can reconfigure them to circumvent some of the issues that give rise to the new breed of attack.

"This solution is done manually and is very time-consuming," Ayoub pointed out. "DNS servers are something people don't want to mess with because they control whether people can get to [popular Internet sites]."

Internet users and business owners will see more of these types of attacks, Ayoub predicted, due to the relative ease with which they can be executed. But Ayoub did point out that the attacks might end up having a positive

effect on the Internet by forcing engineers to go back and look at some of the basic elements of the Net. The recent spate of attacks, said Ayoub, highlight the fact that the Internet was not designed with security in mind.

"We rely on the Internet for so many things and it really wasn't designed for security," Ayoub said. "We will have to get people smarter than us together to change things, and, unfortunately, that probably won't happen until there are more attacks and things get much worse."

Kazaa, SpyAxe Called Badware

The popular Kazaa P-to-P (peer-to-peer) file-trading software and a supposed spyware-blocking application are among the first four programs identified as "badware" by the fledgling StopBadware.org group in a report released Wednesday.

StopBadware.org, in its first report since forming in January, identified SpyAxe, a program advertised as a spyware blocker, as badware, the group's term for spyware, viruses, deceptive adware, and other nefarious software. Besides Kazaa and SpyAxe, StopBadware.org named MediaPipe, a download manager produced by U.K. company Net Publican, and Waterfalls 3, a screensaver distributed at Screensavers.com, as badware.

The four applications "clearly violated" guidelines from StopBadware.org, said John Palfrey, co-director of StopBadware.org and executive director of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. While the group eventually hopes to identify dozens of applications, these four generated significant complaints to StopBadware.org, he said.

"We think there's enormous value... in giving consumers more control and giving them more information before they do something that could be damaging to their computers," Palfrey said. "The longer term goal is we hope that these reports... will lead the providers of applications to operate more openly and more transparently."

Three of the four applications have deceptive installation mechanisms, three modify other software on the user's computer, and three are difficult to uninstall completely, according to the report. However, none of the four violated StopBadware.org's guidelines against hurting other computers, and only one, Waterfalls 3, transmits private data to other sources, the group said.

Sharman Networks, which distributes Kazaa, disputed the report. The software does distribute adware, but "this is made clear to users," said Felicity Campbell, a spokesperson for the company. Users can also update for $30 to stop the ads, or uninstall Kazaa, she said.

Campbell also disputed the report's findings that Kazaa is difficult to completely uninstall, blaming a glitch in the Microsoft Windows operating system for making it appear as if Kazaa files remain. "The glitch simply implies that everything hasn't be uninstalled even though it has," she said in an e-mail.

The three other companies providing the identified software packages were not available for comment.

Without StopBadware.org and other watchdogs, users might stop using computers that can download innovative new applications, instead buying locked-down devices that limit choices, said Jonathan Zittrain, co-director of StopBadware.org and professor of Internet governance and regulation at Oxford University.

"If we don't solve this problem, then my concern is consumers will gravitate naturally from PCs that are capable of running code from nearly anywhere on the Internet," he said. "Those [locked-down] PCs will have gatekeepers, and some great piece of code won't be able to find an audience."

StopBadware.org found:

-- Kazaa has deceptive installation procedures, modifies other software, interferes with computer use, and is hard to uninstall. Although Sharman Networks claims Kazaa includes no spyware, it does include software that subverts the computer's operations. Kazaa also installs adware that can only be closed by killing the process from the Windows task manager.

-- SpyAxe interferes with computer use and is difficult to uninstall. The main application window contains no "exit" or "quit" buttons, and even when a user clicks the "X" button on the upper right corner of the application, it continues to run in the system tray. SpyAxe also launches automatically after a reboot, causing the program to scan the computer and ask the user to pay for the program. The program does not disclose during installation that users will be prompted to pay each time it's used.

--- MediaPipe reserves the right to charge for use after uninstallation, and after uninstallation, an executable remains. MediaPipe also installs a P-to-P program that can use bandwidth without the computer user's permission. The software includes pop-up requests for payments, which is disclosed in the end-user license agreement, but not during installation.

-- Waterfalls 3 includes components by Webhancer, commonly considered spyware. Its license agreement reserves the right to install software as its distributor sees fit, and it adds three programs to the Windows startup folder.

Put Your Antispyware Apps to the Test

Does your antispyware software really work? With security experts warning of "rogue" antispyware products that sometimes do more harm than good, two security researchers have decided to take matters into their own hands.

They're working on a new software product, called Spycar, that will test the effectiveness of antispyware applications. "We decided the best way to do that would be to write a suite of tiny custom programs that each do a tiny spyware-like thing," says Tom Liston, a senior security consultant with Intelguardians, based in Washington, DC.

Liston is developing the software with Ed Skoudis, also an Intelguardians security consultant.

Spycar will contain about 25 small programs, each of which engages in the kind of nasty behavior normally associated with spyware. For example, it will add favorites to Internet Explorer, or add a file to the machine and

change the computer's Registry so that the file launches at startup. The software will then undo all of the changes it has made after the testing has been completed.

"You could really test and see if your antispyware is doing the things that it should be doing," Liston says.

And that is becoming an increasingly important concern for many Internet users. While many antispyware products can identify malicious code when using signatures, a kind of digital fingerprint that alerts the software to unwanted code, Liston says the apps don't do so well when trying to identify unknown software, like that contained in Spycar, that behaves like spyware. "Not too many of them are catching behavior-based stuff at this point," he says.

Liston likens the state of antispyware products to the antivirus market several years ago: overly reliant on signature-based techniques and lacking in standard testing tools.

Security giant Symantec agrees with him, at least when it comes to antispyware testing tools.

"We would love to see the antispyware industry evolve to the point where there are standardized tests," says David Cole, director of the company's security response group. "We've evolved to that point on the antivirus side."

In fact, the Spycar name is a play on a popular antivirus testing tool created by EICAR (the European Institute for Computer Antivirus Research).

Symantec and other major security vendors banded together earlier this year to develop standard ways of testing their antispyware products, something that they say will eliminate customer confusion in this space. Information on this effort can be found here.

It's no surprise that customers are confused. Literally dozens of antispyware products have been classified as rogue antispyware by Spywarewarrior.com, a Web site that serves as a clearinghouse for information about the spyware problem.

One of these alleged "rogue" products came under scrutiny in January, when Microsoft and the Washington state attorney general sued antispyware software vendor Secure Computer. Their complaint alleges that Secure Computer's Spyware Cleaner software not only failed to remove spyware as advertised, but left its users less secure. The White Plains, New York, company pulled Spyware Cleaner from the market soon after the suit was filed.

While Spycar won't help users remove rogue antispyware products, it will give customers of those products a sense of whether they have a problem, Liston says.

Spycar will be available free of charge in May. More information will be made available on the company's Web site at that time.

Plan Revived for XXX Top-Level Domain

Plans for the creation of an Internet red-light district sputtered last year in the face of opposition, but two U.S. senators have revived the proposal in the hope of separating porn from the rest of the Internet's content.

Senate Democrats Mark Pryor of Arkansas and Max Baucus of Montana have introduced the "Cyber Safety for Kids Act of 2006," which would require the Department of Commerce to work with ICANN, the Internet's main oversight body, to develop a domain for adults-only content.

Previous attempts to push through a porn domain have gotten some traction, but also have drawn a great deal of criticism. At a press conference, Baucus said that the .xxx domain would help parents keep kids from accessing adult sites and would help prevent hapless Internet users from stumbling on sexually explicit content.

Under the original proposals for an .xxx domain, it would have been voluntary for creators of adult content to shift their sites to the new red-light arena. But the latest bill would make it mandatory for anyone who creates "lewd" material that is "harmful to minors" to use a specially designated domain, which the senators noted could be ".xxx" or another suffix.

The tenor of the recent proposal also differs from the previous iteration. In the original plan, the domain was discussed as a way for the online porn industry to follow a list of best practices and reduce spamming, among other advantages. Originally, ICANN had endorsed the concept of an .xxx domain, and some adult site operators had been eager to try out the new system.

But in the current proposal, the emphasis is less on creating best practices among adult content producers, and more on protecting children from what the porn producers create. This not-so-subtle shift might spark more arguments than debate, and it remains to be seen whether site owners will reject or agree with the proposal's demands.

Also due to be part of the debate is how the proposal is received by watchdog groups like the ACLU and children's protection organizations. WiredSafety.org, an organization that focuses on children and Internet use, has been a strong supporter of a separate domain name for adult content.

"Protections need to be built that don't exist right now," said WiredSafety.org executive director Parry Aftab. "We need controls and measures that can be tracked and examined."

In some ways, the development of a virtual red-light district could act like its real-life counterpart, separating adult-themed material and easing enforcement of child protection policies.

"As kids become more tech savvy, something has to be done," said Aftab. "We can't just tell children not to visit these sites and assume that will be enough. And we've heard that parental control programs are too complex for people, so best of all would be straightforward, easy applications, and some legislation as well."

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